2015

Adaptable Monsters: The Past, Present, and Future of the Vampire Narrative as a Metaphor for Marginalized Groups

Alexa Wei
Scripps College

ADAPTABLE MONSTERS: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE VAMPIRE AS A METAPHOR FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

by

ALEXA WEI

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR NICOSIA

PROFESSOR BHATTACHARYA

24 APRIL 2015

Abstract

This thesis paper gives a brief history of the vampire narrative and its role in representing the collective anxieties of an age as well as serving as a metaphor for oppressed peoples. It uses Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and J. Sheridan le Fanu's *Carmilla* as historical examples of how the vampire adapts to suit issues of the day such as reverse colonization and female sexuality, respectively. The latter part of this paper speculates on the future role of the vampire in literature and proposes that the vampire could be used to discuss transgender issues as well as challenge the gender binary. It addresses the suitability of the vampire narrative in particular for representing gender as a spectrum using the lenses of Foucault's heterotopias, Kristeva's abject, and Freud's uncanny and pulls examples of early evidence of this trend from Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles.*

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I need to thank Professor Nicosia for her invaluable help and for agreeing to take me on. I also would like to thank Professor Bhattacharya for not only introducing me to *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, but for making Victorian Monsters truly come to life and never forgetting the grey areas. I am grateful to my family for putting up with me these past eight months and for always believing that I could do it when all I had was thirty pages of confused gender ramblings and a lot of anxiety. Thanks especially to my mom for being the biggest fan of my writing. Much thanks to Katie for listening to me patiently even when I threatened to drop out and lead ghost tours. This is dedicated to every NB person who never feels Trans Enough. Stay Monstrous.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Each particular point in the narrative history of the vampire is a representation of society's fears, values, and uncertainties which is why I think it is important to understand the origins of the figure of the vampire in the popular consciousness. From folklore and "real life" vampire cases to John Polidori's short story *The Vampyre,* which kicked off the Western vampire narrative as we know it and influenced more famous vampire figures such as Carmilla and Dracula who followed it. The combination of these three early works and their subsequent adaptations worked to solidify the nature of the Western vampire in popular culture and lay the groundwork for Anne Rice's vampires from the 1970s on. These early visions of vampires explored issues of race, gender, and sexuality and paved the way for of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries such as those in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and Charlaine Harris' *Southern Vampire Mysteries,* both series with openly queer vampires. While vampirism, especially in the latter series, has become an accepted metaphor for queer sexuality, "coming out of the coffin" is still understood in terms of sexuality rather than gender. Openly transgender characters remain conspicuously absent from a genre that deals in liminal spaces, the concept of passing, and pushing the boundaries of gender conforming behavior. However this gender nonconforming behavior tends to be read as a sign of homosexuality in male vampires such as Dracula and as a sign of feminist liberation in female vampires without actually questioning the spectrum of gender or attempting to read the characters as trans. Even after defying the life- death binary and transcending human boundaries, these characters are still subjected to the gender binary and cissexism.

Vampiric creatures and/or spirits have existed in some capacity since Mesopotamia and Ancient Greece and are found in almost all cultures though the creatures we more commonly recognize as vampires only date back to early eighteenth century Eastern Europe .(Maloney) This is also the origin of the word vampire though spellings and pronunciations varied from *upir* to the now-archaic *vampyre* which Polidori used to title his story. Though the ubiquitous *Dracula* and lesser known but earlier *Carmilla* have shifted focus to Eastern European vampires, Greece also had a vampire-like creature called a *vrykolakas* at the same time Eastern Europe began its conception of the vampire, and there is some debate as to whether or not Slavic vampire lore originated in Eastern Europe or was imported by travelling bands of Romani from India or was a derivation of classical Greek and Roman legend. (Stevenson 4) Regardless of origin, it is the Eastern European vampire who has had the most influence on the vampire narrative prior to the makeover the vampire received in the forms of Lord Ruthven, Carmilla, and Dracula.

Before vampires were resigned to the realm of fiction, they were considered a threat just as real as that of the plague. Instead of representing anxieties regarding Othered groups or society, they were indicative of the fear of death and decomposition. Confusion and superstition regarding decomposition created vampires out of corpses that seemed to be decomposing too slowly or had a red fluid leaking out of the nose and/or mouth after burial. While these are both normal processes of decomposition (bodies decompose about eight times more slowly underground than aboveground and the red fluid isn't blood but actually a mix of fluid from the decaying lungs and liquefied brain), they combined with the general fear of death and the unknown to create the Slavic

vampire. Slavic vampires, based heavily on these real life corpses, were thought to be dark, plump figures bloated with the blood of their victims. (Anzelone) This image bears no resemblance to the preternaturally pale, thin image we associate with vampires today. It makes a brief appearance in *Dracula* but is not the default image of the Count within the novel or the popular consciousness. The only shared traits are that of returning from the grave and drinking blood though even the process of blood drinking became more glamorized with the new breed of Western vampire. While Slavic vampires attacked their victims' chests in the general vicinity of the heart, modern fictional vampires often prefer a more delicate and less messy way of feeding; namely, they puncture the victim's neck or wrists with their fangs and suck the blood that way. Also while Slavic vampires mostly hailed from the peasant class, the modern fictional vampire tends to be some form of nobility. (Barber 4) Dracula, of course, is a Count and even Lestat, the twenty-first century product of an American author, is a member of the French nobility. The shift from an everyman real-life vampire to a noble, attractive, and fictional vampire also changed the role of the vampire from strictly a bloodsucking monster to something that could also be an object of forbidden desire. After all, the vampire figure is often tied to succubi and incubi, who are more explicitly examples of taboo sexual desire becoming monstrous and Othered. Once the vampire was no longer a real physical threat, it came to represent a more psychological danger and was picked up by the Romantic movement before finding its home in the realm of the Gothic, which was a new genre at the time. In both genres, the role of the vampire was to serve as a way to explore the nature of human existence and could be seen as a pushback against the scientific achievements of the time to keep some things murky, supernatural, and outside the realm of human understanding.

In order to survive up until the present day the vampire figure has had to keep evolving to suit its times. The refashioning of the early incarnation of the bloated peasant corpse into the pale, noble-blooded creature was only the beginning. Since first being given more human and desirable characteristics the vampire in fiction has only become more human, a progression that makes sense given its role as an imperfect reflection of humanity. By imperfect I mean not only flawed but also shifted. More recent vampire incarnations from *Carmilla* and even *Twilight* give us more humanoid vampires able to pass through human society without detection for quite some time. However, it seems their difference, their Otherness, then has shifted from something readily identifiable by a set of physical traits (i.e. the blood around the mouth, ruddy pallor, even the strange and obviously inhuman form of Count Orlok in *Nosferatu*) to something more internal. And it is with this internal difference that marks them apart from normative human society that the vampire becomes relevant because

> The transgression of the boundaries exposes repressive aspects within a society by making visible the culturally invisible, by tracing the unsaid and the unseen, that which has been silenced, made invisible, made absent…In a culture which equates the "real" with the visible that which is not seen can only have a subversive function. (Icoz 68)

The subversive invisible difference can be variant gender or sexuality or, for women, the concept of sexual agency and desire at all—traits all possessed by actual human beings but often too anxiety-provoking or controversial to discuss openly. The vampire, as an already subversive figure, is then a perfect way to hide one type of subversion within another. In my second chapter I will discuss how le Fanu's *Carmilla* does just this.

The invisible nature of gender identity, sexuality, and other invisible deviations from the norm can be tied in with the invisible nonhuman aspect of the vampire figure. Historically this combination has allowed vampirism to serve as the vehicle and mask for invisible types of Otherness. For example, in the Victorian period, when *Dracula* and *Carmilla* were written the concept of female sexuality was at once taboo and worrisome. Rigid gender roles limited female freedom and denied the possibility of female sexuality at all while men of science pathologized female sexuality through diagnoses of 'hysteria,' nymphomania, and other sicknesses they associated with the female reproductive system. This anxiety is present in the sexualization of Lucy's final death scene in which her fiancé stakes her on their would-be wedding night in a perversion of the consummation of their marriage. Carmilla and Laura are both dangerous women who meet the criteria for nymphomania and hysteria but Carmilla's vampirism makes her the more dangerous of the two, especially given Laura's control of the narrative. This was also a time of anxiety regarding racial Others and Count Dracula is not only Othered by being Transylvanian but by being coded as Jewish. His plan to prey on English women and through them get to their men is a manifestation of the anxiety surrounding interracial marriage and the threat foreign men presented to Englishmen such as Bram Stoker. *Carmilla,* the Sheridan Le Fanu story that predates *Dracula* by twenty six years, presents a lesbian vampire preying on a young girl. The blatant homoerotic undertones of the story are made acceptable by the fact that Carmilla is not human and therefore is somehow exempt from the full implication of her homosexuality. She is human enough for it to be a lesbian story but monstrous enough to also paint her sexuality as monstrous and allow the men of the story to kill her with excessive violence, in an effort to save Laura's life but also to

absolve her of potentially being complicit in sexual crime. Because vampires walk the fine line between human and monster, *Carmilla* is able to explore same-sex desire without necessarily condoning it. This valuable quality is what enables the vampire to become the vehicle to safely explore Otherness.

The transition from living to dead to Undead provides a convenient vehicle for exploring trans identities which makes the figure of the vampire a ripe metaphor for gender exploration. For the Undead, death is not the end but merely a rapid stage of development in which the body undergoes changes that place the formerly human Undead outside the realm of humanity. Death serves as a transformation in which some parts of the original are carried over while other parts are changed completely and "something about the world of the living sticks with the dead, and something about the dead sticks with the world of the living" (Stevenson 16). The rituals surrounding death mark it as a transition, and improper execution of these rituals is one of the traditional ways to create a vampire (Barber 37). In fact, other common vampire origins (death by plague, suicide, being murdered, etc.) can also result in a hasty or insufficient burial, making mangled funeral and/or burial rites a common denominator for causes of vampirism in addition to being a cause in its own right. The fear of somehow failing to aid the transition from one stage to the next is so strong that it created a monster. Even though the body is already dead, by this logic it is not *truly* dead until it has been disposed of or put to rest in the right way. A corpse is not a dead person but an object. Headstones bearing names and histories of the deceased, dressing and wrapping the corpse a certain way, burying it with a special possession, and other funeral rites restore the personhood of the corpse. However these acts, intended to give the dead object a

sense of its former identity, betray the underlying anxiety that we undergo a change after death, that we can become someone other than ourselves or just Other in general post mortem. After all, one of the more popular ways to kill a vampire is to find it in sleeping in its grave and "behead the corpse so that, acephalic, it will not know itself as subject, only as pure body" (Cohen 4). This beheading is also occasionally done at a crossroads to further confuse the vampiric being so that it cannot find its way home.

Sex and gender are separate categories and gender falls under the category of identity; it resides in the "head" so that beheaded corpses awaken at both a literal and a figurative crossroads which serves as a "point of indecision" (Cohen 4). Instead of being unable to find its way back to a literal home, the beheaded corpse is also unable to find its way back to any sense of self or identity. The markers of identity are lost to it and this loss of identifying characteristics creates a more fluid state in which it can be reborn as someone else. Beheading is a crucial part of a lore filled with other acts of violence against corpses because it does not just kill the subject but obliterates it by taking away its identity. By removing the revenant's identity it becomes nothing more than an ordinary corpse.

The fear of loss of identity extends to gender identity as Bronfen writes in her book *Over Her Dead Body: Death, femininity, and the aesthetic*, "Though in the process of death anatomical sexual differences remain, a colloquial understanding of the corpse is that it is not gendered, that it is anonymous, inanimate body, pure materiality without soul or personality" (Bronfen 63-64). The concept of revenants, including vampires, complicates the idea of an agender corpse as they have died and come back; they have undergone the degenderizing process of death but regained their personality upon

becoming Undead. In such situations can their previous gender identity remain intact or is it altered by the dramatic process of dying and being reborn as something else both physically and spiritually?

"To hold onto the 'fantasy' of gender allows one to occult death, which, once disclosed, requires the obliteration of gender" (Bronfen 63). In order to obliterate gender one must accept death, but because we live in a society that treats the gender binary, and gender as a construct in general, as a universal truth, we cannot accept death fully. Death remains shadowy, hidden, and "occult" as long as we cling to illusions of gender and immortality. That vampires often transgress gender roles and the binary hints at the obliteration of gender that death can offer: genderless beings who simply exist, free of the constraints gender distinctions create. They have seen death and defeated it and therefore have no need for the false sense of security the fantasy of gender provides like a protective talisman against death.

The relationship between death and gender is already a complicated balance between the forced gendering required to keep death at bay and the genderless nature of corpses. This relationship is further complicated by the Undead who fall into both the living, gendered categories as well as the dead, genderless categories, so that they are simultaneously alive and dead and gendered and genderless.

In Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles,* the vampire figure is renovated once again to fit a new century with its own set of anxieties and issues and continues the trajectory of becoming more and more humanized. Rice reimagines the vampire as a self-reflective, androgynous rock star, a being outside of time and gender in love with humans and

humanity. Their sexualities and gender identities can transcend what is considered normative and binary because they have already left the realm of normative humanity. I believe that the vampire will have to evolve as it has before but this time it must change to reflect the underrepresented struggle of transgender individuals, especially those living outside of the binary. The anxieties that gender nonconforming vampires hint at will have to become more developed as mainstream, cisnormative society becomes more aware of gender as a spectrum and even the existence of non-binary individuals as a group. As something that challenges the way most people see the world on a fundamental level (the binary gender divide) the existence of trans non-binary individuals is likely to first appear in Gothic fiction as people of variant sexualities did before them. As trans issues gain more visibility, media will have to find a way to respond and adapt to this. And given the likely backlash against them they are more likely to be figured as a Monstrous Other. Vampires are a prime candidate to fill this space. They also occupy a liminal space between living and dead, are adaptable, experience a type of transition (from living to undead), and are capable of very human emotion.

Chapter 1: *Dracula,* Reverse Colonization, and Race

The titular character of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is Othered by both his status as a vampire and by being coded as racially Other as well. The novel begins with Jonathan Harker's account of Transylvania as quaint as and frustratingly less modern than his homeland of England; he complains that the trains do not run on time and that the superstitious locals do not understand the importance of business. Immediately, Transylvania is in competition with England but it is losing because it lacks the hallmarks of Western progress. Jonathan complains that the trains do not run on time and the superstitious locals do not understand the importance of business. The tables are turned, however, when Dracula overpowers and imprisons Harker and invades England. Dracula comes to stand in for the fear of reverse colonization by the East and the anxieties related to the decline of the (English) race prevalent at the time. Using popular nineteenth century pseudoscience —particularly Lombroso's phrenology-based theories of born criminals, atavistic degenerates, and primitive races— Stoker maps the characteristics of a stronger yet primitive and savage race onto his villain so Dracula is differentiated from the heroes of the story by both race and vampirism and therefore twice as monstrous in the eyes of a population who fears reverse colonization and racial diversity. In the end, a crew representing the various levels of British society and Western power use all the trappings of nineteenth century modernization combined with Old World knowledge to prevail over an invading and "primitive" force, though the uncertainty of the effects of coming into contact with this force linger.

The novel begins and ends, not in England where it is primarily set, but in Transylvania as told through the eyes of the British couple Mina and Jonathan Harker. As

Stephen D. Arata notes in his influential work "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety and Reverse Colonization," the association between vampires and Transylvania begins with *Dracula* and Stoker's decision to place his story in a political hotbed as opposed to Styria, which Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* previously established as a land of vampires, proposes a different view of the East. While Transylvania, as well as much of Eastern Europe, had a specific vampire mythos and history of "real life" vampire corpses it is not acting as merely a generic backdrop of superstitious peasants and the rustic, isolated lifestyle of the "East" as Styria is in *Carmilla.* Transylvania was known during Stoker's time more for "political turbulence and racial strife" (Arata 627) than for its vampire mythos. Indeed the vampire folklore of the region is very different from the kind of vampire lore Stoker invents in *Dracula*. Using the racially heterogeneous setting of Transylvania but eschewing much of its own vampire lore means Transylvania is standing in for the Western view of it as it is during the present and somewhat divorced from its local history. Stoker represents the "nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance" version of Transylvania which is how it appears in relation to an allegedly more progressive and scientific Britain: more superstitious and religious, less organized and mechanized, and bearing the marks of past and potential future violence.

In order to give a better picture of Dracula's background and Stoker's adaptation of existing Eastern European vampire myth will now briefly discuss Romanian vampire myth as well as Slavic vampire folklore because of the migration of Slavic tribes to Transylvania (now part of Romania) and its prevalence within the whole of Eastern Europe due to being spread by trade, emigration, intermarriage, and battle. Stoker's inclusion of some aspects of traditional vampire lore indicates he is familiar with it but

the changes he makes in Dracula's physical appearance deviate from the traditional vampire description and become more racialized so that Dracula takes on the features of an anti-Semite's stereotypical Jew, the atavistic traits of Lombroso's criminal, or both in order to mark him as non-English as opposed to non-human. This link between the racial Other and the vampire Other dehumanizes the former. Romanian vampire figures are more commonly known as strigoi or moroi. Strigoi are living witches with two hearts and/or souls; one of the souls is sent out at night to drink blood from the heart or between the eyes (not from the neck) and communicate with other strigoi so it is this soul that resembles the blood drinking aspect of the vampire. Moroi, on the other hand, are dead strigoi or revenant corpses who attack their living family members and drink blood. They do not have souls and this, along with the concept of returning from the dead, aligns them with the more prevalent categorization of vampires as blood drinking revenants. They also possess various characteristics that predestined them to become vampires upon dying such as having red hair and blue eyes, being born with a caul, dying unbaptized, etc.(Anzelone) The similarities between Dracula and his actual Romanian counterparts are limited to blood drinking, the strigoi-like ability to turn himself into a mist and travel that way, the use of garlic to keep him away, and the fact that he must be staked through the heart (among other rituals) in order to be killed. The Romanian vampire eventually merged with pervasive Slavic folklore which possessed an actual physical description of vampires as opposed to an animated or ghostly version of a dead person. Real-life vampire accounts in which corpses were exhumed for inspection created a model for vampires related to decomposition and therefore vampires were thought to be dark, plump, and bloated with the blood of their victims, (Stevenson 74) The only scene in

which Dracula resembles this description is when Harker breaks into his crypt for the second time and finds the Count in his coffin and describes him thusly:

> [T]he cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood… (Stoker 83).

This description of Dracula is true to the existing folklore but only appears in the book once.

Dracula is inherently monstrous by belonging to the vampire race but his goal of fathering a new vampire race in England allows vampirism to stand in for ethnicity even as it links the two. Stoker chose Transylvania for its history of real life vampire accounts and superstition but also paints Transylvania as a violent, war-torn, racial melting pot—the antithesis to the ideal of English racial homogeneity. This is evidenced by Dracula's pre-transformation mortal self possessing the same savage qualities in life as he does in death. He describes himself as having the blood of Attila the Hun in his veins (Stoker 60) and informs Harker of his racially heterogeneous background. Therefore he is not only monstrous because he is a literal monster but because he belongs to what Stoker and other contemporaries of Lombroso would have viewed as a more primitive race of "born criminals" who lack the moral capacity of their more Western and White peers as will be discussed later in this chapter.

From Harker's initial description, Dracula possesses a "thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily about the temples, but profusely elsewhere" in addition to "extremely pointed" ears and "coarse" hands with long, sharpened nails (Stoker 48). This description shares similarities with both an anti-Semite's description of a Jew, especially the repeated emphasis of his nose throughout varying descriptions, and with criminologist Cesare Lombroso's and physician and social critic Max Nordau's descriptions of an atavisitic criminal. Mina Harker even mentions Nordau and Lombroso by name in describing Dracula. The domed forehead matches Lombroso's description of retreating of the "retreating forehead" Lombroso xvi) he observed in the skulls of Italian prisoners as does the "broad and strong" (Stoker 48) chin. Dracula's ears --which are pointed like a dog's or other beast's instead of rounded like a human's, and his excess of hair (the bushy eyebrows, moustache, and hairy palms which mark him as a chronic masturbator) place Dracula as more primitive on the scale of evolution. Likewise his pointed nails resemble claws and his hands are not the "white and fine" hands that Harker expects of a gentleman but "broad, with squat fingers" (Stoker 48). At the time Lombroso's theories, influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution and the then-science of phrenology, proposed that atavistic, or ancestral, traits could reappear in the human species making some individuals or races more primitive than others. His description of criminals and degenerates overlapped with the physical traits nineteenth century readers would have associated with Jewishness to create a racist, anti-Semitic pseudoscience that medically Othered Jewish people. (Halberstam 338) As Judith Halberstam notes in "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's Dracula," the titular character "resembles the Jew of anti-Semiotic discourse in several ways: appearance, his

relation to money and gold, his parasitism, his degeneracy, his impermanency or lack of allegiance to a fatherland, and his femininity "(Halberstam 337). The image of Dracula stopping to scoop up gold coins while fleeing the Harker, who has wounded him with his Kukri knife (Stoker 346), emphasizes the importance of gold to Dracula as does the scene in the beginning of the book in which Dracula follows blue lights in the forest to find hidden gold. While the other characters possess enough money to comfortably travel, and Mina herself notes the "wonderful power of money" by saying "What can [money] not do when it is properly applied; and what might it do when basely used" (Stoker 397), they are attached to what money can buy and not gold for gold's sake.

Even if not read as a character coded as Jewish, Dracula still retains the characteristics of the degenerate and embodies the threat of reverse colonization or by a more physically stronger non-Western power or even a merging between the two. The Victorian English fear of the decline of the race finds its match in the figure of the vampire who has the ability to infect others with his blood and to make them a member of a different species through this exchange of blood. Dracula's plan to take over England, or at least London, even resembles the fear of interracial marriage by his assertion that he will use the women to infect the men: "Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed" (Stoker 347). That Dracula singles out the women to be his first victims creates a parallel between his victimization and heterosexual procreation: "Like Frankenstein's monster, Dracula's designs upon civilization are ready by his enemies as the desire to father a new race" (Halberstam 347). Because he is a vampire and can turn anyone he wants into a vampire, that is make them

his child even as he fathers that child with them by mingling their blood, the heterosexual component of this is not necessary. Dracula has the potential to create new life without the help of a woman and therefore his choice to infect the women first speaks to a human anxiety. He threatens the legitimacy of paternal bloodlines by giving other women his blood and mingling it with theirs, like he does with Mina and Lucy though Mina is the only one to conceive a child. He also has the ability to pass among regular humans and prey on them without their knowledge, just as White men feared White-passing men might marry White women who would bear their mixed race children. Dracula himself proudly proclaims to be of mixed race [“We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races…” (Stoker 59)] and therefore a threat to the English ideal of racial purity. In a novel where the sharing of blood takes on a sexual, binding connotation as shown by the transfusions Lucy receives which initially can only be given by her fiancé, it also fulfills a reproductive purpose so that the act of sharing blood becomes a metaphor for procreative, heterosexual sex within the novel. By viewing this act as a sexual one, then Dracula’s attack on Mina, in which he feeds on her and then coerces her into feeding from him by threatening Jonathan, is a type of rape scene. Moreover, it is a racialized rape scene in not unlike “racist images of a "black" man in bed with a "White" woman” (Mckee, 55). After her attack, Mina declares herself “Unclean, unclean!” (Stoker 324) and unfit to touch Jonathan for fear of hurting or corrupting him. She is so distraught by the possibility she could become a vampire (with all the violence and sexuality that entails as evidence by Lucy’s transformation) that she is ready to kill herself before allow that to happen (Stoker 330). Her fall from grace is so great that when Van Helsing presses the communion wafer to her forehead it burns her;

Mina then repeats her refrain of “Unclean! Unclean!” adding “Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh!” (Stoker 336). Dracula’s corrupting force has changed the nature of Mina’s being, her flesh, without fully vampirizing her the way it did with Lucy. Therefore even without a full-on physical transformation there is something impure or ‘unclean’ about sharing blood with Dracula in both the literal and the figurative sense.

Likewise, Dracula’s attacks on Lucy, which turn her into a vampire, leave her impure so that the White men in her life have to not only kill her but also purify her through the act of killing her. Vampire Lucy’s eyes are described as “unclean” (Stoker 249) and Seward in his journal describes their task as one which would “restore Lucy to [the men] as a holy, and not an unholy, memory” (Stoker 253). Lucy’s corruption is punished with a violent second death at the hands of men who view the act as saving her prior self; it is not enough to lay her body to rest but she must be returned to the state of acceptably desirable object that she was to the men in life. Though the vampiric version of Lucy is more overtly sensual and attractive, this is considered a form of corruption. By being with Dracula and taking his blood into her to become a vampire she has become atavistic like him since Lombroso’s theory stated that all early women were prostitutes and atavisitic degenerate women were therefore extremely sexual as a harkening back to the this prostitute origin. This transformation draws on the fear and the stereotype that the ‘primitive’ man has ruined this White woman for the White men in her life by making her more like him. When they reverse this change by enacting violence on her she is cleansed as Seward notes:

> There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the

> one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity. (Stoker 255)

"The one best entitled" to Lucy's destruction is Arthur, Lucy's fiancé, who is representative of the British aristocracy in the Crew of Light. As an aristocrat his blood is the purest of even the rest of the vampire hunting crew as Seward is middle class, Van Helsing is foreign, and Quincey represents a rugged American West. He is also her fiancé and therefore was to gain possession of Lucy and her fortune which he does anyway upon her first death. Because he had this level of ownership over Lucy in life, it makes Dracula's intercession a type of theft. Staking Lucy returns her to Arthur's possession and removes her from the control of an outside force. In the cases of both Lucy and Mina, White femininity falls prey to and is corrupted by the racially Othered male figure who has invaded not only the country but is now attacking the integral nucleus of the domestic sphere to disintegrate domestic structures from within. This is also an anxiety related to the fear of reverse colonization.

The two ways to eradicate a race from within are to either assimilate it or destroy it completely and Dracula plans include a little of both; he can kill members of the English race for food and assimilate the rest through vampirizing them. Both options would have seemed especially threatening to a people who perceived their race to be declining in health and numbers and therefore felt vulnerable to an invading outside force. In order to fight that force, the English vampire hunters must also leave the comfort of their homeland to fight Dracula on his own turf, exposing themselves to the influence of Dracula and Transylvania in general. Thus a third threat, that of the vulnerable Englishman abroad is introduced or as Patricia McKee writes,

> Stoker's travellers thus pose two possibilities of racial degeneration of concern to late Victorians: that the Englishman abroad will be absorbed into an alien and primitive culture because of his own internal weaknesses; or that a stronger, more primitive race will invade from without and assimilate the English. (McKee 45).

The idea of the Englishman's internal weakness is dramatized by Dracula's supernatural abilities that give him an advantage of the relatively weak humans in the novel. This idea of a weaker, but empiric, race falling prey to 'more vigorous peoples' is an indicator of the anxiety surrounding colonization and the ability to maintain control of colonized lands and peoples. The real fear of the vampire in this novel then is not the vampire itself or death (as it was in the original folklore) but the fear of invasion and reverse colonization. In reverse colonization:

> A terrifying reversal has occurred: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes the exploited, the victimizer victimized. Such fears are linked to a perceived decline –racial, moral, spiritual – which makes the nation vulnerable to attack from more vigorous, 'primitive' peoples. (Arata 623).

From the beginning of the novel, Dracula and Jonathan's interactions identify Dracula as a reverse colonizer and Jonathan as perpetually off-balance in his new position of victim.

Dracula fits the bill of reverse colonizer with his physical strength and hardiness due to his vampire abilities and immortality, his time spent studying England in order to blend in and continue attacking the populace unseen, and his desire to exploit the English as a source of food as well as potential labor as with his desire to make Mina his

helpmate. In one of his first scenes in the novel he tells Harker, “the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told” (Stoker 61). He is referring specifically to his own warrior past but this line, delivered before Dracula’s invasion to a man representing an imperialist power, seems like a threat as well as a comment on the idea of racial decline. Dracula simultaneously alludes to how he as a member of the great race has fallen, the way other great races found themselves under colonial rule, while foreshadowing that the same fate can befall the “great race” of the time: the English people. This parallel between Dracula’s fall from conqueror to conquered and the fall the British Empire might experience is continued when Dracula tells Harker, “Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race; that we were proud…” (Stoker 60). Dracula’s monologue which is recounted in Jonathan Harker’s journal serves as an example of the kind of destruction Dracula is capable of (because he is referring to himself and not his ancestors as he tells Harker) and a threat of the British Empire falling to ruin just as Dracula’s former empire has. Dracula is a conqueror who lost his empire and is moving to London to start over and rebuild. The kind of decline of the race feared by the late Victorians has happened in Dracula’s past and therefore may come to pass again, though this time in the form of a supernatural threat. The vampire, as a type of parasite, is an ideal metaphor for the fear of a force that invades, infects, and exploits its host.

Dracula, despite having the weaker mental faculties of a criminal degenerate is still stronger than Jonathan Harker, Quincey Morris, Dr. Van Helsing, Lord Godalming, and Dr. Seward –henceforth referred to as the Crew of Light, a name established for them by Christopher Craft in “’Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s Dracula.” Van Helsing makes several allusions to Dracula as having a “child-

brain" and "child-though" as opposed to the "man-thought" he and Jonathan possess. (Stoker 382) He and Mina also label Dracula as a born criminal as per Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso's theories of criminality and degeneracy. Mina explains, on behalf of Van Helsing, "The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind" (Stoker 383). While the fear of reverse colonization lingers, the Westerners making up the Crew of Light still comfort themselves with their sense of genetic (and racial) superiority. Moreover, the various levels of Westernized society that the Crew of Light represent all get placed in the racially/genetically superior category. The diverse group is made up of an English aristocrat (Arthur), members of the English middle class representing law (Jonathan) and medicine (Seward), rugged American masculinity (Quincey), and a Dutch doctor and metaphysician with an open mind who can serve as the link between old world superstition and nineteenth century progress. Van Helsing has a foot in both worlds as he is simultaneously "one of the most advanced scientists of his day" (Stoker 147) and the one who identifies Lucy's condition as vampirism and possesses all the knowledge of vampire lore. His foreignness is exaggerated by his accent and his misunderstanding of English slang (as when he does not understand the use of "blooming or "bloody") and sometimes calls for other characters to translate his thoughts into words as Mina does when she translates Van Helsing's concept of the "child-brain" into Lombroso's and Nordau's theories of criminal degeneracy. Van Helsing stands between the rest of the Crew of Light and Dracula on the scale of primitivism which is also reinforced by his knowledge of the occult as Arata notes, "The primitive and the occultist alike operated beyond or beneath the threshold of the "civilized" rational mind, tapping into primal

energies and unconscious resources as well as into deep-rooted anxieties and fears" (Arata 624). Van Helsing manages to be part of the Crew of Light despite this because of his ability to possess the knowledge of the occult in conjunction with modern science. By holding both views in his mind simultaneously he is able to take advantage of the advances of cutting edge medicine of the time, such as blood transfusions, as well as folkloric remedies such as garlic and crosses. He passes this ability onto his Seward and the rest by asking them first to keep an "open mind" (Stoker 230) before showing them the proof necessary for a logical, reasonable modern man to believe in vampires. Once they have the adequate proof they are ready to face the vampire. The knowledge of vampires, however, does not shake their Western view of the world. As McKee explains,

> Eventually, [the Western men's] speculative capacity enables the Westerners to hold multiple beliefs concurrently, and their open-mindedness and self-consciousness allow them both to simulate belief in the vampire and to destroy him. (McKee 47)

Learning about vampires becomes another tool for them to use and they approach the knowledge as such without worrying about how it might affect their beliefs, religious or otherwise. Though the Crew of Light are all Western by virtue of this ability to possess concurrent beliefs in science and superstition they are not all English and therefore not all equally relevant in fighting the threat to British imperialism. An American and a Dutchman are part of this English crew fighting an outside threat to their country but Van Helsing is old and more feeble than the others and Quincey dies at the end so that the English characters remain strong and healthy in comparison to even their own Western or Westernized allies.

The link between Westernization and technology remains a theme in the novel that both makes the novel possible within the universe of the novel because of the typewritten copies Mina makes of it and also gives the Crew of Light an advantage over Dracula. While Dracula may have supernatural abilities in the end they are no match for the typewriters, telegrams, trains, and other nineteenth century markers of modernity Mina and the others make use of throughout the novel. It also creates a further separation between Dracula and the Crew of Light that shows him to still be an outsider to this world despite his studying. He can buy a house but he cannot use a train; instead he relies on the much slower method of travel by ship which gives the others an advantage over him. The novel takes the time to detail the neatly organized travel itineraries of the vampire hunting party and one of Mina's most useful skills to the group is that she has the rail schedules memorized. They communicate with each other through telegram, passing information between themselves quickly so that they remain one step ahead of Dracula. Mina's shorthand and typing skills allow her to make copies of the various journal entries, newspaper clippings, and phonograph recordings so as to keep everyone within their six-person group informed and also prevent the records of their investigation from being destroyed forever when the original copy is obliterated. The nineteenth century of these vampire hunters is an age of information and increased and faster travel that they take full advantage of in order to defeat Dracula. The Crew of Light take this hallmark of colonialism, the insistence that Western technology is inherently the apex of progress, and use it to shield themselves so that Dracula's supernatural nature and Old World superstition cannot disturb the natural order of their technologically driven world. They also use this technology to further differentiate themselves from Dracula. Mina

Harker, representative of the New Woman, comes to represent a particular Western time and place that most of the novel takes place in:

> As the channel through which Western men collect and reproduce knowledge-both because her recollections provide information about the vampire and because, as stenographer and typist, she records others' information-Mina reforms herself into a means of producing the symbolic domain in which the West will reclaim its dominance. (McKee 45)

The use of this technology and scientific reason provide an alternative to superstition and religion as the only way for them to defeat Dracula. While Jonathan is taken in by nuns after his imprisonment by Dracula, religion is not very present within the novel. Indeed, none of the characters seem particularly religious except for perhaps Van Helsing who carries the Eucharist with him for vampire hunting purposes. The novel takes care to present the Crew of Light in coaches, rail cars, and graveyards and even details what Jonathan eats but never shows them going to church. Technology stands in for religion and separates these modern characters from the peasant superstition which categorizes Jonathan's descriptions of Transylvania in his journal. While Jonathan identifies himself as an "English Churchman" he becomes deeply uncomfortable when offered a crucifix because he had "been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous" (Stoker 35). The divide between East and West is then religious as well as racial.

In the end the threat of Dracula is neutralized and his otherness assimilated to the point that the Harker's can safely visit Transylvania a year after the events of the novel. They Harkers insulate themselves in their middle class English lifestyle, married with one child and life appears to have returned to normal. The family structure is intact and no

longer threatened by outside forces and all that remains of their ordeal is a “mass of typewriting” (Stoker 418). The British Empire, as represented in the form of the safe domestic sphere, is insulated and strong with the only threat of racial decline indicated by the unacknowledged fact that Quincey Harker now contains the blood of Dracula as well as that of his biological parents because Mina was forced to drink Dracula’s blood. The lingering anxiety there is that Quincey may someday manifest the atavistic or even vampiric traits of Dracula though so far he appears normal. The danger of reverse colonization will never truly be vanquished but for the moment a sense of normality and stability are restored.

Chapter 2: Female Sexuality, Vampirism, and Queer Desire in *Carmilla*

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* is presented as part of occult doctor Dr. Hesselius' casebook and narrated by the human girl Laura. It marks an early incarnation of the female vampire in Western literature as well as a noted lesbian text and departure from the compulsory heterosexuality in the victim/vampire relationship of previous vampire text John Polidori's *The Vampyre.* While the relationship between Aubrey and Count Ruthven in *The Vampyre* contained homoerotic subtext, it lacked the sexual nature vampiric feeding would become tied up with in *Carmilla* and, twenty-six years later, Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* The titular character chose to feed only on young girls and would cultivate relationships with some of her victims, feeding on them and living with them until she eventually killed them. However, her relationship with Laura is different in that Carmilla not only drinks from Laura but makes passionate declarations of love for her and implies that she has plans to turn Laura into a vampire as well so that they can spend eternity forever. Carmilla is thwarted by a group of men, including Laura's father, who discover her vampire nature and stake her. While Carmilla, as a vampire, is powerful and able to exist as a lesbian, Laura is unable to claim a queer identity or gain any agency. Laura is dependent on the men in her life to expose Carmilla as a vampire and dispose of her as they see fit. In fact she can only reveal the extent of Carmilla's love for her because there is no risk of Laura herself being seen as complicit or queer; Carmilla's vampirism is assumed to extend to every facet of her relationship with Laura and therefore Laura is absolved of queerness because Carmilla shoulders the entirety of the blame for their relationship. Tying lesbianism to vampirism makes sense

then within the novel as well as fiction in general since both are seen as signs of being Other.

Throughout the story, Carmilla's love for Laura is at once possessive, expressive of a desire to become one, and built on a sense of sameness she feels with Laura. While the latter two reasons are attributed to Carmilla secretly being an ancestor of Laura's I believe they are also evidence of Carmilla's vampirism and queerness that Laura willfully ignores so she can keep her new friend around. Laura's desire for a friend, mother, and perhaps a romantic interest become tied up in the figure of Carmilla whether Laura is willing to acknowledge it or not and Carmilla's vampirism is what allows her to fulfill these roles. She does not age and is an older female relation of Laura's so she has the potential to become a motherly figure especially when she visits Carmilla as a child. Carmilla's first visit to Laura is almost motherly at first as she comforts the six year old girl but she then preys on Laura instead of protecting her. Carmilla and Laura's mother are also connected by both being undead, as Laura's dead mother reappears to warn Laura to "beware of the assassin" (Le Fanu VII "Descending"). However, when their apparent ages coincide when Laura turns eighteen, Carmilla takes on the role of friend as per Laura's eager request. Carmilla eventually shuns this role as well though and soon attempts to become Laura's lover despite what Laura's narrative alleges are Laura's own ignorant protestations. Laura claims, knowing well that her account will be read by others, that she somehow manages to repel some of Carmilla's advances despite not recognizing them as romantic or sexual in nature. She does indicate that Carmilla's relationship did seem like that of a suitor though Laura is only able to reveal this by saying she thought perhaps Carmilla was a boy in disguise. Laura is therefore able to

recognize Carmilla's designs on her but only able to express or contextualize them through the lens of heterosexuality. As I will elaborate below, she continues to play this game of assumed naiveté throughout the narrative with regards to Carmilla's vampiric nature as well but to even less effect since, even though she is the victim of and primary evidence of Carmilla being a vampire, she is unable to gain access to this knowledge without the help of various men. In both cases, Carmilla's nature must be seen through the lens of the heteropatriarchy in order for Laura to admit she understands it.

Until the end of the novella, when the General appears and gives his account of how Carmilla repeatedly fed on his daughter, Laura narrates the majority of the story and her account of it is less tied up in the vampiric nature of Carmilla than it is in her relationship with Carmilla. Laura's focus on how Carmilla made her feel, how Carmilla felt, and the struggle to keep defined boundaries within their relationship makes her version of the story less a vampire tale and more of a dark, doomed love story. Her challenge throughout is not determining whether Carmilla is a vampire but whether Carmilla is a friend to her or something more. By focusing on their relationship, Laura misses several clues that Carmilla is a vampire. Though there are several confusing and mysterious aspects to Carmilla – her invisible and unexplained illness, her sudden and strange appearance in the middle of the night, her nighttime wandering, the vision of her covered in blood at the foot of Laura's bed, and her mostly nocturnal schedule – Laura is able to rationalize them as either sleepwalking or the strange behavior of a town person compared to a sheltered and rustic Laura. These quirks are actually warning signs related to Carmilla's vampirism and her plan to prey on Laura but Laura ignores them; instead she focuses on and is most unsettled by Carmilla's love for her because they are both

women. As Laura weakens because of Carmilla feeding on her, Carmilla becomes more and more passionate with Laura and this passion manifests itself in little outbursts that trouble Laura. Subsequently Laura tries to distance herself from Carmilla's feelings in a few different ways. First she tries to write Carmilla's "paroxysms of languid adoration" off as simply momentary "insanity" so that she does not have to confront them as real. This also fits with the role of the mysterious invalid that Carmilla has created for herself. Even when Laura is willing to acknowledge the affection Carmilla has for her is love, she tries to place it into a normative category of love between women by saying perhaps it is familial love and they are somehow related as shown in the quote below. Though Laura does not know it yet, she and Carmilla actually are related so their love is not only homosexual but incestuous as well so their relationship is doubly taboo. Laura purposefully misunderstands Carmilla's declarations of romantic love in the hopes that Carmilla will accept the acceptable alternative that Laura has offered her and when that fails she offers herself up as a double by saying that she might merely resemble someone Carmilla loves. This idea of doubling is repeated by Carmilla, who sees the two as doubles, and by the parallels between the General's dead daughter and Laura but in this instance Laura is trying to create a double self. She attempts to invent a double who would look like her and be able to accept Carmilla's love. Even that resemblance places Laura too close to being an object of same sex desire for her comfort though as evidenced by Laura recounting,

> 'Are we related,' I used to ask; 'what can you mean by all this? I remind you perhaps of someone whom you love; but you must not, I hate it; I don't know you-

> -I don't know myself when you look so and talk so.' (Le Fanu IV "Her Habits—A Saunter")

She cautions against homosexual love in general with the "but you must not" and a love for herself in general with the personalized statement "I hate it." Laura's last and most powerful effort to displace Carmilla's desire for her, and perhaps her own desire for Carmilla, is to claim that desire negates their very identities, presumably their identities as women. She refuses to know Carmilla, or indeed know herself, in the context of the romantic and implied sexual love Carmilla expresses for her. Laura's comment that she does not know herself also echoes her feigned innocence in not knowing that Carmilla is in love with her; so both of the things Laura knows but says she does not know are related to homosexuality. Laura also reacts to the possibility of a romantic relationship with Carmilla by trying to force their romantic interactions into a more normative and acceptable form in order to contain the threat of same-sex desire. She even goes so far as to speculate that Carmilla might be a man meaning that she does not actually misinterpret Carmilla's romantic love for her as she pretends later on.

> What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress. But there were many things against this hypothesis, highly interesting as it was to my vanity. (Le Fanu IV "Her Habits—A Saunter")

She recognizes Carmilla's love and her "suit" as analogous to that of a heterosexual courtship but once again fails to be able to justify it in normative terms. She then has to give up on her theory of Carmilla being a boy, and therefore a suitable romantic object because even when Carmilla acted affectionate "her ways were girlish; and there was

always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health" (Le Fanu IV "Her Habits—A Saunter"). The only masculine thing about Carmilla in Laura's eyes is her attraction to women which Laura, who grew up sheltered and indoctrinated in compulsory heterosexuality, mistakenly attributes to belonging to only a masculine identity. So she begrudgingly admits "there were many things against this hypothesis" yet is able to accept questionable explanations for Carmilla's vampiric behavior and in fact seems much less concerned with trying to find ways to rationalize that real threat.

Unlike *Dracula*, which is a vampire novel concerned with killing a vampire, the vampire hunting portion of this story does not come until the end of the novella so the eradication of the vampire threat is given far less space than the threat of variant sexuality. Both however fit the a convention of the Victorian vampire narrative which involves "spending more time diagnosing the vampire than showing it at first hand, introducing a number of 'paternal figures' – often doctors – into the story for exactly this purpose" (Gelder 49). *Carmilla* is a story in which one type of abnormality is tied up in another kind of abnormality and Carmilla's vampirism only marks her as even more separate from the normative, heterosexual woman lest her sexuality be mistaken for or deemed acceptable. Making her a monster at once excuses her lesbianism by judging her against a nonhuman scale, and condemns it by passing moral judgment on her and killing her to contain the threat of abnormality. Killing Carmilla, and in doing so returning Laura to her father, then becomes more important to her father and the other paternal/patriarchal figures in the novel because it is a way to 'fix' Laura whereas Laura is unaware in both cases that there is something in her that needs to be 'fixed,' especially since she is able to

and encouraged to blame Carmilla. Laura may not even truly want to be returned to compulsory heterosexuality since at the end she is still thinking about Carmilla a year later with some degree of wistfulness:

> …to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations—sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (Le Fanu XV "Ordeal and Execution")

Or as Ken Gelder puts it in his book *Reading the Vampire,* "…even after Carmilla has been killed, the 'queer' desire remains alive for Laura" and "same-sex desire between women is licensed, then managed or regulated (by 'eliminating' its object)—but continues to be licensed even after this through Laura's 'reveries'" (Gelder 61). If Laura had really accepted Carmilla as a monster, as someone completely and utterly bad for her as the men in her life decided, then she would only remember Carmilla as the 'writhing fiend' and not as the 'beautiful girl.' Moreover, she fancies that she hears Carmilla returning to her but does not express any degree of dread or terror at this development. Laura's ambiguous feelings towards Carmilla are furthered by her inability to articulate the exact nature of the possible relationship between her and Carmilla—whether threatening or loving. This unspeakableness is a result of the polarization of the 'normal' and the deviant in which the deviant is "always subordinated to the former by depending on it for its vey articulation…one can only comprehend 'deviancy' through the discourse of 'normal' sexual practices" (Gelder 57-58). If deviancy cannot be normal then Laura should be deeply unsettled, if not disgusted, by Carmilla but she seems to be irritated at

most. Compulsory heterosexuality provides a smokescreen that grants Carmilla access to Laura in both Laura's own eyes and those of her father. Carmilla's mother, who presumably would have the ability to protect Laura since she attempt to do so even from beyond the grave, is absent in this narrative so that it becomes a struggle between Laura, Carmilla, and patriarchal figures such as her father and the General. Carmilla is then able to pass as both a human and a heterosexual because of the dominant assumptions of the world she lives in and she uses both of these to her advantage, passing through the world without being seen for what she truly is until she comes to stay with Laura. Her ability to 'pass' is emphasized by the sheer volume of damning evidence presented against her that is presented to the reader even before the characters in the story catch on. She is practically nocturnal, professes her love to Laura more than once, and at one point is even seen at the end of Laura's bed covered in blood immediately after Laura receives her mother's warning—and yet, all of these queer and vampiric behaviors are excused until a council of men bands together to form a sort of bureaucracy that identifies her as a vampire (because they cannot label her as queer).

Carmilla's relationship with Laura also mirrors the theory of hysterical women making other women hysterical as proposed in Weir Mitchell's influential writings on female hysteria in *Blood and Fat: And How to Make Them.* Tamar Heller's article "The Vampire in the House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, and Female Knowledge" elaborates on this theory by drawing out Mitchell's vampire metaphor in which the hysteric woman acts as a vampire who sucks the blood and energy out of the healthy people around her. Carmilla certainly fits Cesare Lombroso and Gina Lombroso-Ferrero's descriptions of the female hysteric whom they describe as having a "pale, elongated face" and a "mobility of

mood" meaning rapid mood swings (Lombroso 534). While Carmilla displays the physical traits of the hysteric woman, Laura is also a hysteric the longer Carmilla is around and even notes later in the story "My complaint seemed to be one of the imagination, or the nerves…" (Le Fanu VII "Descending). She goes from happy, if lonely, to caught somewhere between desire for Carmilla and abhorrence for her. Even when Carmilla's passionate behavior disturbs her she still craves her company. Laura has every one of her needs provided for but she still wants the kind of companionship Carmilla provides. Heller's reading of Carmilla and Laura as female hysterics states "…what all this male nervousness about voracious women suggests, both the female hysteric and the female vampire embody a relation to desire that nineteenth-century culture finds highly problematic" (Heller 78). I argue that Laura can also be read as a nymphomaniac, another category Victorians created for women who possessed taboo desires and were medicalized for being women who experience desire.

Mitchell's view of hysterical women as greedy and selfish echoes the parasitic nature of the vampire, particularly a female vampire like Carmilla who instead of nurturing a family or even a young girl like Laura, drains them instead and uses them for her own personal gain. In this way the female vampire is in direct opposition to the Victorian ideal woman who was expected to be the "Angel of the House" by tending to the needs of those around her before her own and bearing any personal suffering silently. Laura, despite describing herself as a "rather spoiled girl, whose only parent allowed her pretty nearly her own way in everything" (Le Fanu, I) mimics this behavior as she becomes sicker from Carmilla's prolonged feeding. She fades away quietly, choosing to hide the extent of her poor health from her concerned father:

> My sufferings had, during the last week, told upon my appearance. I had grown pale, my eyes were dilated and darkened underneath, and the languor which I had long felt began to display itself in my countenance. My father asked me often whether I was ill; but, with an obstinancy which now seems to me unaccountable, I persisted in assuring him that I was quite well. (Le Fanu, VII "Descending")

This languor matches the description of Carmilla above when Laura is asserting Carmilla's femaleness. Indeed Carmilla is consistently described in terms of languor. It is also one of the traits recognizable in representations of the aristocratic lesbian which Carmilla is described as possessing and which also include being apathetic, sleeping well into the afternoon, and being highly sexed to the point of being obsessive. (Gelder 60) In Victorian times, this word also had a link to sexuality. "Languor, sunken eyes and pallor are three of the highly visible signifiers of self-abuse familiar to Victorian society" (O'Callaghan) but these three symptoms are also signifiers of blood loss. Languor then becomes a trait common to both vampirism and sexual pleasure. It even makes an appearance in the scene in Dracula when Jonathan Harker is being seduced and is about to be bitten by the three vampire women, an experience which he relates in his journal as "I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy" (Stoker 70). The combination of vampirism, forbidden pleasure, and an inability to distance herself from Carmilla make Laura take on the traits of a nymphomaniac.

Since masturbation is linked to nymphomania and is one of its symptoms even as it is one of its causes it is not a stretch to read Laura and Carmilla's relationship as one of the nymphomaniac and the object of nymphomania as well. M.D.T. de Bienville's dissertation on nymphomania describes it in terms of a parasitic disease overpowering its

host: “the Nymphomania…lurks, almost without exception, under the imposing outside of an apparent calm, and frequently hath acquired a dangerous nature, when not only its progress but its beginnings elude our perception” (de Bienville 516). This description matches Laura’s repetition of suffering but not knowing exactly why and her outwardly calm, listless appearance despite the effects of Carmilla feeding on her. This description itself becomes more relevant to Carmilla and Laura as this next passage follows:

> Sometimes the fair one, who is attacked by it, stands with one foot upon the precipice without suspecting that she is in peril. It is a serpent which hath insensibly glided into her heart; and fortunate she must be, if before it can have mortally wounded her, she should exert a powerful resolution, and flee with speed, from this cruel and destructive foe. (de Bienville 516).

When Carmilla first moves in to Laura’s home she is put into a room bearing a tapestry of Cleopatra holding an asp to her breast. (Le Fanu III “We Compare Notes”) The connection between Carmilla and the serpent is also apparent in her fangs which Laura unwittingly compares to “two needles” in her account of Carmilla biting her as a child (Le Fanu I “An Early Fright”). Carmilla is also the cause of the awakening of Laura’s nymphomaniac symptoms and she does so by gliding into Laura’s heart. But it is also possible that Carmilla is not the cause, but rather a catalyst. If Laura is infected by Carmilla’s own nymphomania it does not necessarily have to be through their relationship but may be genetic since Carmilla is an ancestor of Laura’s: “…individuals such as Lucy Westenra in *Dracula* and Laura in J S Le Fanu's *Carmilla* are congenitally predisposed towards destructive female sexuality through family weakness…” (O’Callaghan). Laura could be mimicking Carmilla’s destructive sexuality or she could

have secretly possessed it all along and only needed Carmilla to awaken it. Laura is also within the appropriate age group to begin developing nymphomania as it "frequently surprises the younger part of the sex, at a marriageable age" (de Bienville 518) and Laura is eighteen at the time of Carmilla's second visit to her. Their strangely obsessive relationship is also typical of that between a nymphomaniac and the object of her nymphomania, on both sides. Laura and Carmilla are both simultaneously nymphomaniacs and objects of nymphomania. De Bienville's description of the psyche of nymphomaniacs shows them to be "continually absorbed in the same thought, and their greatest apprehensions are lest they should be withdrawn from it, for a single moment" and explains that they "neither perceive, not understand anything which passes near them" (de Bienville 518). This description fits Laura's fear that Carmilla will leave and she will be alone again and also why Laura is able to block out Carmilla's vampirism in favor of her fascination/obsession with Carmilla. I have made much of the use of languor within *Carmilla* but languor is also a symptom of the female nymphomaniac which first Carmilla, and then Carmilla and Laura possess. The parallels between vampirism and nymphomania are created by the effects of Carmilla's feedings coinciding with behavior increasingly symptomatic of nymphomania appearing in Laura. These parallels are made more explicit in de Bienville's theory of nymphomania as those who are not able to fight against the disease die of it or become "monsters in human shape" (de Bienville 518). The vampire is also a monster in human shape in addition to being dead so Carmilla's ability to infect Laura, her vampiric state, and the fact that she seeks active gratification of her desires (whether they be lust or bloodlust) mark her as a late stage nymphomaniac and all the more terrifying for it because she is able to conceal this.

One of the worst repercussions of the nymphomania is loss of reputation but Carmilla's constant reinventing of her identity, as evidenced by her anagram-style name changes, allow her to indulge her nymphomania without reproach. She is also dangerous in because she is able to express female sexuality without the aid of a man and without being punished by men presumably for decades before finally being staked.

Carmilla's nymphomania is also more threatening to patriarchal concerns regarding female sexuality because she uses it to practice lesbianism. By preying on women rather than men she is able to pass on her nymphomania since it was regarded as a female disease and not a male one. It also de-emphasizes the importance of male dominance and control as evidenced by how quickly Carmilla takes over Laura's life by replacing her father as primary object of affection. Female homoeroticism "excludes men and eludes male control, to figure female sexuality as lesbianism underscores the threat that women's desire poses to male authority" (Heller 79). Laura's father is elderly and Laura is eighteen, old enough to be married already, yet no efforts have been made to find a husband for her. In the absence of her father's willingness to admit that Laura is maturing sexually or even that in practical terms she will require a husband to move through society, Carmilla is able to usurp the role of husband. Because he will not willingly give Laura to another man (her husband), she is stolen by a woman. Carmilla's appearance into Laura's life disrupts the traditional domestic trajectory of Laura's life since choosing Carmilla over a traditional lifestyle precludes taking a husband but, due to Carmilla's vampirism, does not prevent her from having children. She and Carmilla could conceivably make vampire children without the involvement of a man, live independently off of Carmilla's mysterious wealth, and choose their own sexual partners without male

intervention. This can be seen as Carmilla and Laura's relationship "defy[ing] the traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women to promote male bonding" (Signorotti 607). Laura and Carmilla bypass the male authority who acts as middle man in his own interests and instead take ownership of themselves by giving themselves to whomever they please based on their own desires rather than their duty to a male authority. With this in mind it is interesting to note that "it is only through the descriptions of Laura's father and the general, both patriarchal restrictive figures, that Carmilla is seen as ghostly, dangerous, to be destroyed" (Wisker 170). While Carmilla poses a more obvious threat to Laura, it is not Laura who is afraid of her power. Carmilla feeds on Laura but it is not Laura who kills her but the men whose authority she challenges, especially Laura's father because she contests his ownership of Laura. Both are engaged in a battle over Laura while each attempting to keep Laura from knowing.

Going back to de Bienville's serpent analogy, he mentions that the young woman affected by nymphomania must "exert a powerful resolution, and flee with speed" but Laura does neither of these things The former is inaccessible to her because of her overpowering feelings for Carmilla and the latter impossible because she lives in a remote castle with her serpent. The position of defender then is removed from Laura and given to a series of male characters, most of whom only show up in the latter part of the novel for the sole purpose of identifying and killing Carmilla. These outsiders force their way into the narrative and return the structure from one between two women to a triangle in which two opposing forces fight over a woman and that central woman is figured as an object to be won. Laura is, in effect, pushed out of her own story to make room for the men and this is especially apparent when the narration switches from her voice to General

Spielsberg speaking through her. These men also "ruminat[e] together privately, away from Laura's hearing" and "form a kind of bureaucracy" so that Laura, the actual victim, is left out of the vampire hunting (Gelder 49). Like the Crew of Light in *Dracula,* the bureaucracy who saves Laura is made up of men representing different types of male dominated fields. Her father is bourgeois and English, an outsider in Styria where the novel takes place and younger than the other men in the group who possess more old world knowledge. The General represents the military and also acts as a double of Laura's father since both are single fathers with daughters who are victimized by Carmilla; he is the one who comes to warn Laura's father about Carmilla. But these two men alone are not enough to take on Carmilla. Baron Vordenburg, representing the aristocracy, and a descendant of one of Carmilla's former lovers before she became a vampire, is the one who provides the necessary information to find Countess Mircalla's (Carmilla's) tomb. As one noble he is privy to the information regarding another noble. The priest comes to bless Laura. The last member of the party is the commissioner, who represents the Law and who the others refuse to begin without despite the fact that Carmilla is still on the loose and a threat. These proceedings are kept secret from Laura and are not explained even as the priest stays in the next room with her father while she sleeps. Laura is taken care of by these paternal figures who save and cleanse her yet her only thoughts are of the absent Carmilla, who Laura does not know will be executed the following day. Laura recalls this night by referencing her father keeping information from her and then remarking "The sinister absence of Carmilla made the remembrance of the scene more horrible to me" (Le Fanu XV "Ordeal and Execution"). He father's infantilizing treatment of her and her longing for Carmilla are juxtaposed such that in this

instance Laura is siding with Carmilla over her father even as the former is trying to save her from the latter. While this variety of patriarchal figures is busy forcing Laura back into the normative role of daughter and nonsexual being, Laura still wants Carmilla. The events surrounding Carmilla's execution cause Laura pain even years later and these figures do not care because they make decisions for Laura without consulting her. Her mysterious illness concerns them but they do not trust Laura enough to tell her that she is dying and Carmilla is the cause. Perhaps this is because they are on some level worried that Laura is somehow complicit in her relations with Carmilla or that she will betray them in favor of Carmilla by telling Carmilla what they plan to do to her.

Laura's appearance also begins to mimic the Victorian beauty ideal of the female invalid as a result of her associations with Carmilla. Thus as she is becoming more abnormal inwardly, outwardly she assumes a more appropriate type of femininity. The female invalid is a status symbol for her house as she is wealthy enough (or rather, well supported enough) to not have to work. She is also nonthreatening because she is frail and even more dependent on others than other women of her time. The aesthetic of the female invalid as pale and frail comes from the epidemic of pulmonary tuberculosis which, despite killing almost one in four people, was romanticized by poets such as Edgar Allen Poe to the point where it was viewed as a "glamorous wasting disease of poets and beautiful women" (Lawlor 3). Poe himself concluded in his philosophy of composition that "the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world" (Poe 7). Poe was not the only person of his time to hold that view though. As Erika Kvistad's paper section on deathly femininity notes

> Victorian culture is full of images of women made more beautiful and more perfectly feminine by death. The serene face of the 'Inconnue de la Seine', purported to be the death mask of a drowned young woman, hung in thousands of homes; according to A. Alvarez it was considered an aspirational ideal of beauty. In *Woman in American Society*, Abba Goold Woolson described the feminine ideal of her time as something between an invalid, a corpse and a ghost, with her sunken cheeks, lost colour and wasted smiles...like some heart-sick wraith'. (Kvistad 75)

This theme of the beautiful dead woman has also been studied and elaborated on by Elizabeth Bronfen in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* in which she chronicles a history of aestheticizing and romanticizing the figure of the beautiful dead woman in art and literature. The beautiful dead woman is ideal femininity performed to an extreme; she is beautiful and silent, unable to threaten the patriarchal society around her but still performing the valuable function of beautiful object. Laura is not dead but she is deathly ill and silent in her suffering. She is the ideal female patient because she does not challenge the male doctors who examine her even when they are obviously not doing her any good and she also patiently waits for the paternal figures in her life to find the true cause of her illness. This illness can also be seen as a punishment for her relationship with Carmilla and for her reluctance to be cured because it would mean letting go of Carmilla. As she comes dangerously close to a non-normative state by spending more time with Carmilla and, conceivably, approaching the point at which Carmilla would also make her a vampire as she intended, Laura takes on more normative and idealized female roles– first the beautiful and nobly suffering invalid, then the

helpless frail woman, and if Carmilla chose not to turn her into a vampire then she would have become the beautiful dead woman as well.

Throughout *Carmilla,* Laura's focus on Carmilla as a person rather than a vampire creates a sense of culpability that complicates the vampire-victim relationship by implying consent. Consent is explicitly mentioned in the description of the vampire's "artful courtship" in which, instead of killing the victim immediately the vampire "seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent" (Le Fanu XVI "Conclusion"). The sexualized nature of the vampire-victim relationship is further complicated by being one involving same-sex desire and the medicalization and pathologization of female sexuality at the time. By linking vampirism to nymphomania, hysteria, and lesbianism, Carmilla is able to turn Laura into a sort of vampire as well: "That Laura does not fit the most obvious role available to her, and which she tries to write for herself —that of innocent or ignorant victim— transforms the angel in the house into yet another 'vampire,' or knowing accomplice in sexual crime" (Heller 79). In the end, Carmilla is killed but Laura's remaining desire for her and vampiric traits prove that the vampire threat and female desire cannot be contained or ever truly die despite the best efforts of patriarchal males to suppress or destroy them.

Chapter 3: Non-Binary and Monstrous Identities

In this chapter, I am moving away from close readings of past vampire narratives and towards a more theoretical approach. I will be looking at the possibility of intertwining the vampire with the experiences of non-binary gender individuals to create the next generation of vampire story. While my last two chapters looked at how the vampire narrative adapted to represent the cultural anxieties surrounding marginalized groups of the day, this chapter looks forward to what may be the next group the vampire narrative will represent. By looking at both non-binary gender identities and vampires through popular Gothic lenses and using examples from Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and Rice's own take on gender as a spectrum, I intend to show that vampires have already been used to hint at non-binary identities and androgyny and that the comparisons between the two can be taken much further.

Non-binary and androgynous figures (figures which embody both traditionally masculine and feminine traits) meet much of the same criteria as Monsters in the Gothic tradition as shown by how applicable certain theories more commonly associated with the Gothic are to the concepts of gender that is ambiguous or "culturally unintelligible" (Butler). I use Monster with a capital "M" to denote a category separate from or outside of normative humanity, more in keeping with the Oxford English Dictionary definition I give below; when monster with a lower case "m" is used, I am using the word in the more colloquial sense in which fearsome qualities and a connotation of moral evil is ascribed to the word. The shared Otherness and liminal non-normative space occupied by Monsters and non-binary genders and/or androgynous identities make variant genders another way to code Monsters as separate from humans while paralleling the experience

of trans non-binary individuals. (I will discuss the concept of transitioning and its relationship to the human-to-vampire transition later in this chapter.) Because of this the figure of the non-binary individual is already Monstrous in a sense even before this quality becomes combined with the more traditional idea of the Monster, more specifically the most human of the monsters—the Vampire. Vampires are the most human of monsters because they take on a form resembling that of humans and have memories of human experiences pre-transition. With the publication of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* they were also given voice that allowed them to reveal how closely their thoughts and feelings aligned with humans while being forever barred from the human existence. Therefore even before Rice's overtly androgynous vampires, non-binary qualities could be read onto the Monstrous figures in Gothic fiction because of Gothic fiction's role in allowing society to explore Other and in-between places, concepts, and characters. I will look more closely at the agender and genderfluid qualities of Rice's vampires later in this chapter but first to address the overlap between Monsters and non-binary identities as seen through the lenses of Freud's Uncanny, Foucault's heterotopias, and Kristeva's theory of the abject.

Non-binary is an umbrella term that can also act as an identity (much like the term queer) for "people who are not men or women, or are both men and women, or who are something else entirely, or are some combination of these things, or some of these things some of the time" (Non-binary.org). As a marginalized group that experiences gender oppression, non-binary people can also potentially occupy a space that scholarship usually reserves for women as Other. These concepts can overlap when thinking about any gender outside of the normative male gender as being Other and therefore a cause for

anxiety that manifests itself in supernatural narratives. Usually discussions of vampires and their abilities to transgress gender roles completely ignore the possibility of non-binary genders and choose instead to view female vampires as empowered by masculine qualities while analysis of male vampires with feminine qualities is often dominated and overshadowed by homosexual subtext and correlating gender with sexuality (a point I will elaborate on when discussing Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines androgyny as "having both male and female characteristics or qualities" (MW). There is some overlap with non-binary identities as the stereotypical gender presentation for non-binary people is androgyny, often resulting in the inability to distinguish the assigned-at-birth gender of the individual. When I refer to androgyny in this paper I mean ambiguous gender presentation or possession of qualities that are a combination of masculine and feminine. Because I am often addressing characters who do not self-identify as non-binary but are identified as androgynes, use of androgyny refers to gender performance rather than identity (though there are individuals who claim androgyne as a separate gender identity.) Though I read certain characters as non-binary and believe that this is a valid reading I want to be able to distinguish between non-binary identities and androgynous qualities.

Their deviation from social norms and black-and-white categories of identity makes it possible to view Monsters and non-binary gender individuals from a similar perspective. The Oxford English Dictionary defines monster thusly:

> a. Originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size

> and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening. (OED)

While the traditional definition of Monster places it somewhere between human and animal and a more popular way of distinguishing monsters places them outside the realm of both, so too are non-binary gender identities between male and female or outside of the binary completely in their own category. The anxieties these familiar yet unfamiliar category-bending identities arouse are indicative of the fragile and arbitrary nature of the societal conventions and constructions that they oppose. Additionally, the complicated nature of the definitions of both Monster and non-binary gender alludes to the tricky space they occupy by being defined as separate or different from the social norm. Monsters are Not People just as non-binary individuals are literally Not Binary but when it comes to making these distinctions it becomes difficult to determine exactly where the line between normative and non-normative person lies. Cisnormativity adds to the erasure of non-binary identities which contributes to them being seen as less real and invalidates their existence. According to society "monster under the bed" isn't real but the gender binary is, even though they are both societal constructions.

Kristeva's theory of the abject developed the idea that the abject is rejected because it disturbs social reason and/or reminds the viewer of the superficial nature of the societal norm. She says of the abject: "A certain 'ego' that merged with its master, a superego, has flatly driven it away. It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game" (Kristeva 2). To extend this metaphor, the ego is aware that the rules of the game (and perhaps the entire game itself) are arbitrary when it comes into contact with something that does not follow the rules and therefore the superego discards

the outlier in order to keep the ego playing the game. Instead of adapting the game to include the elements that do not conform to its rules, the superego violently throws out the nonconforming element often with an unconscious and visceral response such as nausea or vomiting. While the aforementioned physical response is Kristeva's example for how the body reacts to abject reminders of death and decay such as corpses, blood, or excrement which she lumps under the category of the unclean (Kristeva 2-3), the theory holds up for more subtle forms of fear and rejection of what we call the unknown but is more accurately what we do not, cannot allow ourselves to, or outright refuse to know because it does not fit within accepted social parameters. Based on her theory we react to the unclean with disgust because it breaks down boundaries, rules, and order. Corpses are human bodies without life in them and reminders of the inevitability of death and the constant decay of our own bodies as we approach death. Monsters similarly draw attention to the fragility of human existence and how it becomes difficult to draw the line between human and non-human across the spectrum of Othered humans such as racial Others or gendered Others such as women and other traditionally marginalized genders. Monsters also expose how despite the societal norms which we have adopted to create a sense of safety and order, we are still incredibly vulnerable and possess a limited and potentially inaccurate worldview. This seed of doubt manifests itself in even more monsters and externalizations of anxiety and identity that can only be safely explored in the realm of fiction; and to keep the threat to our version of reality separate from the world we inhabit we specifically explore these concepts in Gothic fiction so no matter how similar the world we create is to our own we can distinguish between the two by different sets of rules. By creating a new world with new rules we do not have to alter our

own rules or perceptions in the world we actually live in. We identify our doubts and anxieties and whatever breaks the fragile rules of what Foucault would call our 'utopia' just long enough to quarantine them and call them fiction.

While Foucault's theory of heterotopias applies to literal spaces, it can be extrapolated to apply to the less literal mental categories as well. As Russell describes in his utilization of the theory of physical heterotopias, "Utopia is a place where everything is good; dystopia is a place where everything is bad; heterotopia is where things are different" (Mead 1). This difference from the norm then is neither good nor bad, just as Monster as a category does not denote moral good or evil. Wagner describes this category as being the embodiment of "physical and mental third spaces" (Wagner 549) while Foucault himself places his heterotopias "between two extreme poles" (Foucault 8). This definition provides a parallel for non-binary genders occupying the space between male and female while maintaining their own third category. The mirror-like aspect of heterotopias posits Gothic fiction as a heterotopia of the real world. Monsters become real in the heterotopia which is different or Other by definition and therefore a safe space in which to explore non-normative identities as shown in the previous chapters.

The specific type of heterotopia in which Monsters and non-binary identities belong is the heterotopia of deviation which Foucault defines as the type "in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed." By separating those who do not fit into discrete binary categories from what is considered normative, socially constructed binaries are allowed to exist and be seen as natural, therefore positing gender variant identities as unnatural. A side effect of rejecting gender variant identities from the "utopia" is that they become more acceptable in the

heterotopia which was built to confine and quarantine them from challenging the idea of the gender binary. The heterotopia then becomes a place to safely explore the spectrum of gender identity away from the cisnormativity of everyday life.

While non-binary gender categories can occupy a heterotopia of deviance they are also capable of acting as heterotopias. Foucault's third principle of the heterotopia is that it is able to "[juxtapose] in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 6). While certain non-binary identities can be thought of as between male and female they are also able to fuse the seemingly opposite masculine and feminine into a single, separate identity usually recognized through androgyny. Viewing androgyny as a form of heterotopia makes it a space, or category, in its own right.

Freud's work "The Uncanny" (1919) is considered one of the major theoretical concepts in the study of Gothic literature (Wagner 545). In his theory Freud argues that the unsettling nature of the uncanny stems from the familiar rather than unfamiliar elements present within an object. It is this paradoxical combination of familiar and unfamiliar that makes things frightening. Freud discusses doubles and doubling as sources of the uncanny, specifically because they arouse an "urge towards defense which has caused the ego to project that material outward as foreign to itself" (Freud 547); the uncanny acts as a mirror because it reflects the viewer but also traps the image of the reflection to keep it separate from the viewer. There is a double mirroring present in non-binary identities as well as androgynous presentation as both masculine and feminine qualities are reflected back but are also allowed to mingle in a fixed space safely apart from the viewer. Likewise Monsters often embody socially unacceptable desires and/or

traits in the viewer. Empathetic monsters such as Rice's vampires have the ability to make these desires and traits more acceptable because they do not have to play by society's rules and they are able to justify their behaviors in a way that garners human sympathy. The *Chronicles* written from Lestat's point of view in particular often directly address the reader in an appeal for understanding of his position as a vampire and why he is driven to kill, make other vampires, and commit other acts that would be considered unforgivable if committed by a human character. But Lestat's position as an outsider to humanity always longingly looking in gives him the appearance of an underdog while his Monstrous nature allows him to be judged against a set of values that is not human and allows him more leeway. He is a Monster but an articulate, charming (qualities both more commonly associated with humans than Monsters) one who aims to come off as a well-meaning victim of his own fatal flaws, nature, and circumstances.

One of the fears doubling and the uncanny bring to light is the idea that the familiar may not be as familiar as once thought. Monsters and other social Others may be able to pass undetected in society and if they are able to blend in among the familiar and the normative then how can they be properly rejected? And if these representations of what we find confusing or questionable within ourselves can remain hidden in plain sight then what's to stop our own inner familiar sphere from becoming frightening and unfamiliar? Vampires resemble humans and are good at pretending to act human and remain unnoticed in order to survive. Non-binary individuals do not go around announcing their gender to the world and it is not possible to know someone's gender just by looking at them. These figures subvert norms simply by existing even though the vampire is more obviously threatening to the social order by causing death. The anxiety

of straddling the line of familiar and unfamiliar is what makes the uncanny "arouse dread and horror" (Wagner 545) and to see the source of dread is a double of ourselves can deepen that horror or create a personal connection with the uncanny.

Vampires may be monstrous, but there is undoubtedly a fascination with them in popular culture so that they have endured. Over time they have become less monstrous and more human, more relatable. Rice's introspective vampires and the "vegetarian" vampires of the *Twilight* series are hardly horrifying to the humans in their lives the way Lord Ruthven or Dracula were in their time. This move towards what focusing on what makes vampires similar rather than what makes them different makes them less uncanny as they lose some of the edge of the unfamiliar. There are recognizable tropes within the genre now so if anything the vampire is familiar to a modern audience thanks to almost two hundred years of vampire fiction consumption. And yet vampires remain popular because they are still convenient doubles; the social issues may have changed but the need to explore the taboo in a safe and externalized way remains.

Now that I have looked at non-binary and Monstrous identities through the lens of Freud, Kristeva, and Foucault, I would like to take a little time to compare the liminal nature of both vampirism and non-binary genders in general. While vampires are obviously a type of M/monster, they have a specific set of qualities that makes them particularly good analogies for non-binary humans. Both are assigned to a certain category at birth but, through the process of social and/or physical transitioning, come to occupy a different category later in life (or death). The adjectives 'assigned (fe)male at birth' (AFAB or AMAB) and 'designated (fe)male at birth' (DFAB or DMAB) are used to describe what gender an individual was raised to believe they were and how the

outside world viewed them. For example, a DFAB individual would be socialized as a girl from infancy. Should they decide that their gender identity coincides with this socialization then they are a cisgender (or cis) woman. However if this identity does not fit their actual gender identity then they are transgender, or trans. The important part is that they are unable to choose what gender they are assigned in at birth. The phrase transitioning specifically refers to the process of beginning to present as and live as the gender one identifies with as long as that gender is different from the one assigned to them at birth. Transitioning can refer to social transitioning, physical transitioning, or both. Social transitioning involves taking control over how one chooses to be seen by society with regards to gender identity. This may involve a change in pronouns or gender presentation. After socially transitioning one is "out" as transgender. Physical transitioning refers to physical changes one undergoes in order to align themselves better with their true gender identity and can include hormone therapy, various surgeries, laser treatments, etc. Physical transitioning is often done to combat dysphoria, the usually unpleasant feelings created by the awareness of a discrepancy between physical characteristics often associated with the individual's birth gender and their actual gender. Or more simply, dysphoria is the sense of disconnect between a mental identity and a physical and/or perceived sense of identity. It is this second sense of the word I will be using in reference to the vampiric dysphoria which I discuss later in this chapter.

Vampires undergo a physical transition when they go from being living human beings to being Undead. Often the heart stops, the skin becomes deathly pale, and in some lore (including Anne Rice's) the flesh becomes hard and cold. However much their bodies change, their previous human experiences give them human consciousness which

places them at an in-between stage. Some will lose this sense of humanity as they age and some, like Rice's Louis, work to retain it, prolonging the complete transition or creating a transition to a creature that is neither completely vampire or completely human and therefore shut off from both species. Retaining traits of the living and the dead and mingling them together in one physical body makes the vampire a monster who knows what it is like to be human even as it is forced to prey on and live among humans.

> The European vampire, unlike the spectral vampires of antiquity, is an actual corpse in flesh and bone on the move. The vampire is situated 'in between' life and death. Physical death has taken place but not bodily dissolution. Hence it has equal access to two opposed worlds and having a real body, it needs real blood. (Icoz 68)

While there is access to both worlds, it is in specific contexts, usually that of feeding. Vampires, especially those who are so old they become removed from their humanity, are no longer welcome in normative human society and especially would not be welcome if their vampire status was known. Rice's summarization of her vampire books concurs with this theme of societal rejects saying, "It's all about outsiders, who are told they are damned and condemned but, rather than linger in the shadows, they refuse to accept that" (Herald).

Trans people also experience this isolation and ostracization from a community they formerly inhabited. Transitioning makes their trans status known in a transphobic society built by and for cisgender individuals. However, should they not perform transness to a certain degree, they can be accused of being "not trans enough" which is an

insult that is usually levelled against trans non-binary individuals. Therefore they can also face rejection from the trans community.

Where there is a difference between how an individual perceives themselves and how their identity is perceived by society, dysphoria can occur. But while vampires usually tend to keep their nonhuman nature hidden, that does not seem to be the cause of dysphoria for them. Rather Rice's vampires struggle with the reality of feeling human but no longer being human. Rice's interpretation of vampires has a somewhat Catholic undertone in the use of the phrase 'immortal soul' but she agrees that "Vampires are the best metaphor for the human condition. Here you have a monster with a soul that's immortal, yet in a biological body." Assuming this is true, vampires are experiencing a type of dysphoria in which the immortal soul is forced to confront its bodily prison. My interpretation of this dysphoria somewhat reverses this statement and replaces soul with mind so that it is the mortal mind that is experiencing dysphoria because a human consciousness which is meant to have a lifespan of roughly eighty years is now going past that date in a body that does not age. A hundreds year old consciousness may only appear to be twenty. The discrepancy between how the vampire is perceived and what it actually is also creates a type of dysphoria in interactions with others. For example, Claudia in *Interview with the Vampire* has the body of a child of around five but the intellect, reasoning, and experience of a woman over forty. Because she lived as a human for such a short time she also has the fewest vestiges of humanity; she is vampire raised as a vampires by vampire "parents" yet is treated as a human child and therefore kept dependent on her "parents" Louis and Lestat. She expresses a desire for an adult body to match her mind and it is revealed later in *The Vampire Armand* that Armand attempted to

fuse her head onto an adult woman's body but this procedure failed. Her attempt at physical transitioning is aborted; as a vampire and a corpse frozen in time before decomposition her body is not supposed to change. Even among vampire society (as in Armand's coven and Marius' warning to Lestat), making a child vampire is taboo for this very reason.

The vampires of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles,* as a product of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, take up queerness as their social issue. Louis and Lestat, the main characters and narrators of the first two novels are bisexual and walk the fine line between androgynous and genderqueer presentation. In his second thesis of his seven on monsters, Cohen states:

> Anne Rice has given the myth a modern rewriting in which homosexuality and vampirism have been conjoined, apotheosized; that she has created a pop culture phenomenon in the process is not insignificant, especially at a time when gender as a construct has been scrutinized at almost every social register. (Cohen 5)

While this sentence conflates sexuality with gender identity, it does rightly identify gender as a construct and allude to the timeliness of Rice's queering of the gender binary to include other genders. The vampire has traditionally served as a metaphor for relevant social anxieties and issues of the time as Cohen once again points out,

> In each of these vampire stories, the undead returns in slightly different clothing, each time to be read against contemporary social movements or a specific, determining event: …[including] the acceptance of new subjectivities unfixed by binary gender… (Cohen 5).

Based on Cohen's (and many others') link between the vampire narrative and social issues then it follows that at the time of the publication of *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Vampire Lestat* (1976 and 1985, respectively), variant sexualities, gender identities, and ways of expressing gender were becoming more visible and were therefore absorbed by the vampire narrative. While non-vampiric beings in Rice's novels experience queer desire, it is specifically vampirism which is connected to genderqueerness, which her human characters within the *Vampire Chronicles* do not experience.

While the connection between Rice's androgynous vampires and the time in which she began writing about them shaped her take on vampirism, her ideas regarding gender likely also played a part in their gender ambiguity. She wrote a *Vogue* article about in the November issue of 1983 in which she states that we live in a "technological society obsessed with the redefinition of masculine/feminine" (*Vogue*). The social issue, or obsession, of the time then was how to define masculine and feminine and where the boundaries between the two could be drawn, if they could even be drawn at all. In this article (which focuses on famously androgynous rock star David Bowie), Rice asks for an end to gender and a return to a pre-adolescence that is at once agender and pangender in its distinctions (or lack thereof) between the masculine and feminine. In her eyes, rigid and binary gender distinctions are limiting and an oversimplification of gender. Her solution for our society's attempts to redefine gender is to make it at once all-encompassing of the masculine and feminine while ending gender as a concept. She states,

> The end of gender isn't the abolition of the masculine/feminine. Rather, it is the abolition of the gender tyranny that would divide us into armed camps…if we can

> preserve that earlier complexity, that mingling of masculine and feminine we hear so exquisitely in the boy soprano, we can have the endless possibility of it all. (*Vogue*)

Rice wrote this article between the publication of the first two Chronicles, Interview with the Vampire (1976) and The Vampire Lestat (1985). Interview focused more on homosexuality and the creation of a new nuclear family in which two male vampires create a vampire "daughter" for themselves; whereas Lestat, published nearly a decade later, gives us the backstory of the title character who is an androgynous rock star like Bowie, and Gabrielle who is his transmasculine mother/lover/vampire progeny. Part of Louis' crisis in Interview was coming to terms with his love for Lestat while Lestat, who takes lovers regardless of gender, has no such sexuality crisis and takes on traditionally feminine qualities quite naturally.

Rice's personal experiences with gender also indicate a sense of ambiguity regarding binary gender distinctions. Rice states in her autobiography Called Out of Darkness: a Spiritual Confession, that she "took no note of any particular distinction having to do with being male or female" (COD 73) as a child. While retelling her unusual personal history, Rice continued to align herself with things usually coded as masculine and not understand why this is considered unusual. She objected to her masculine given name, Howard Allen, not because it was a name traditionally given to men but because she thought it sounded ugly (COD 46). At age twelve, she decided she wanted to become a Catholic priest and was confused as to why her gender barred her from this vocation; furthermore her dream was met with the statement that theologians were not sure women even had souls for some time. Of this experience, Rice writes "I had no sense of being a

young woman, or of being excluded from anything because of gender" and remained convinced that it was her age and not her gender that prevented her from becoming a priest (COD 82).

Rice also finds it easier to write from a male point of view, specifically the gay male point of view, because she believes it is regarded as more neutral than a feminine one. (Riley 55) Rice's own gender identity remains somewhat enigmatic as in 2010 she said of herself as a female-identified child, "I perceived myself mainly as neutral and invisible" in reaction to society's expectations of her as a woman to constantly be Other. Then in 2014, as an adult, Rice uses more explicitly agender terminology saying, "I don't feel comfortable with any gender identity, which is why I write about characters that transcend gender" (Herald).

Two of her characters who become vampires, Gabrielle and Mona, do fulfill transgressive gender roles. Rice describes Mona as someone who "doesn't care too much about feminine identity" (Ripley 51), which could mean that Mona identifies as something other than or overlapping with female such as a demigirl: " someone assigned female at birth who feels but the barest association with that identification, though not a significant enough dissociation to create real physical discomfort or dysphoria" ("Terms"). Gabrielle undergoes a more dramatic transition after becoming a vampire. Rice herself states that Gabrielle is the only female who could easily take up what she views as the very male role of the wanderer (Ripley 51). In addition to masculinizing Gabrielle's role in the series, Rice also refers to her as a "transvestite" because she dresses in men's clothing to escape the gender restrictions she faced as a woman in the eighteenth century. I view Gabrielle's identity as more closely aligned with a

transmasculine identity because she continues wearing men's clothing into the twenty first century and seems to have disdain for and a rejection of feminine qualities—most notably her inability to be a nurturing mother to Lestat throughout the series.

I believe Rice has laid the groundwork for transgender and non-binary vampires to exist within fiction but the Vampire Chronicles are only the beginning. There is still a lack of openly transgender vampires within the genre despite a history of vampires with queer sexualities. It is time for transgender vampires to come out of the coffin.

Works Cited

Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist:" Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies* (1990): 621-645.

Anzelone, Allie, Laura Daube, Natalie Faragalli, Kim Farwell, and Chris Lehman. "Romania." Vampire Legends Around the World. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2015.

---. "Slavic Europe." Vampire Legends Around the World. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2015.

Barber, Paul. Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality. Yale University Press. New Haven, CT. 1988.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic*. Manchester University Press, 1992.

Butler, Judith. "Gender trouble." *Continental Feminist Reader.-Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers* (2003): 29-57.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster culture (seven theses)." *Monster theory: reading culture* (1996): 3-25.

de Bienville, M.D.T. “From M.D.T. de Bienville, *Nymphomania* (1775).” *Gothic Evolutions: Poetry, Tales, Context, Theory*. Wagner, Corinna, ed. Broadview Press, 2014. 516-519.

Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowiec. "Of other spaces." *diacritics* (1986): 22-27.

Gelder, Ken. *Reading the Vampire*. Routledge, 2002.

Halberstam, Judith. "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's" Dracula"."*Victorian Studies* (1993): 333-352.

Heller, Tamar. “The Vampire in the House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, and Female Knowledge in Le Fanu’s ‘Carmilla.’” *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*. Harman, Barbara Leah, and Susan Meyer, eds. Taylor & Francis, 1996. 77-95.

Icoz, Nursel. “To be Undead: To Be Feared or/and Pitied.” Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil. ed. Carla T. Kungl. Inter-Disciplinary Press. Oxford, UK. 67-71.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of horror*. Vol. 98. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Kvistad, Erika. "‘What Happens, or Rather Doesn’t Happen’: Death and Possibility in Alice James and Christina Rossetti." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 12.2. (2013): 75-87.

Lawlor, Clark. "Transatlantic consumptions: disease, fame and literary nationalisms in *tttt*he Davidson sisters, Southey, and Poe." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36.2 (2003): 109-126.

Le Fanu, J. Sheridan. *Carmilla.* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Lombroso, Cesare and Gina Lombroso-Ferrero. “From Cesare Lombroso and Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, *Criminal Man* (1911).” *Gothic Evolutions: Poetry, Tales, Context, Theory*. Wagner, Corinna, ed. Broadview Press, 2014. 532-539.

Maloney, Devon. “The Wild Evolution of Vampires, from Bram Stoker to *Dracula Untold.*” Wired. 9 October 2014. Web.

McKee, Patricia. "Racialization, Capitalism, and Aesthetics in Stoker's Dracula.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. Brown University, 2002.

Mead, Walter Russell (Winter 1995–1996). "Trains, Planes, and Automobiles: The End of the Postmodern Moment". World Policy Journal 12 (4): 13–31

"monster, n., adv., and adj." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. Web. 10 November 2014.

Nonbinary.org. Nonbinary.org Wiki. 5 November 2014. Web.

O'Callaghan, Victoria. "Diane Mason, The secret vice: masturbation in Victorian fiction and medical culture.” Manchester University Press, 2008, pp. viii, 184

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The philosophy of composition." (1846).

Signorotti, Elizabeth. "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in ‘Carmilla’ and ‘Dracula.’" *Criticism* (1996): 607-632.

Stevenson, Jay. *The complete idiot's guide to vampires*. Penguin, 2009.

Stoker, Bram, and Glennis Byron. Dracula. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1998.

Wagner, Corinna, ed. *Gothic Evolutions: Poetry, Tales, Context, Theory*. Broadview Press, 2014.

Wisker, Gina. "Love Bites: Contemporary Women’s Vampire Fictions." *A New Companion to the Gothic* David Punter ed. Blackwell Publishers, 2012. 167-179.